



UPDATE

Newsletter of the African Burial Ground & Five Points Archaeological Projects

Fall 1994

Volume 1 Number 5

Update, the newsletter of the African Burial Ground and Five Points Archaeological projects is published by the Office of Public Education and Interpretation of the African Burial Ground, 6 World Trade Ctr., Room 239, New York, NY 10048, (212) 432-5707, for the purpose of providing current information on New York City's African Burial Ground and its historical context.

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NEW VIEWS FROM OLD VOICES

Ama Badu Boakyewa and
Marie-Alice Devieux

FOUR DOLLARS REWARD

Ran away from subscriber on the 4th, a Negro Man, named Cook, about 50 years of age, about 5 feet high, has sore eyes, he is a native of Africa, talks bad English— Had on when he went away, a short blue homespun coat, brown homespun trousers, and a round hat which he wears flapping; he pretends to be free, and is supposed to be in New York City. Whoever takes up and secures said slave, so that the owner gets him again, shall be entitled to the above reward, and all reasonable charges paid by Martin Schoonmaker, Flatbush —

April 20, 1792
New York Daily Advertiser

Questions of history often exist within the many landscapes of our consciousness. But how to access those questions and their answers— how to nurture the seeds of our interests—remains for some a daunting process.

On June 26, 1994, Marie-Alice Devieux and Ama Badu Boakyewa, two public educators at the Office of Public Education and Interpretation, initiated Phase I of the newspaper research project. Assisted by Emilyn L. Brown, historical researcher at OPEI, the educators were directed to uncover the African presence from the earliest available newspapers published in New York. The newspapers consulted in the Phase I aspect of the project spanned time periods from November 1752 to June 17, 1793. The two issues in question were: what were the concerns of Africans and how were Africans perceived by Europeans during New York's early history. The answer to these questions began to unfold through the perusal of microfilm at the New York Public Library and the New York Historical Society. The African presence evidenced among the research was then compiled in the form of a narrative and presented to the OPEI staff.

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New York City.....15

"What we need to-day are not more voters but better voters..." - - - See Page 12

New Views From Old Voices (cont.)

EIGHT DOLLARS REWARD

RAN-AWAY from the subscriber, the 29th ult, a negro Man named JACK, about 5 feet 8 or 9 inches high, 21 or 22 years old, of a yellow Complexion, something of an Indian look, speaks good English; had on when he went away, a coarse corduroy coatee, vest, and breeches, took some other clothes with him; he also took with him a negro woman, named CRESHE, called his wife; they changed their names, as he is an artful fellow. The above reward will be given for the negro only, on information where he may be found, reasonable charges, by the subscriber. P. Shay, No. 5 Chatham — Nov. 2, 1791, *New York Journal and Patriotic Register*

There were many advertisements and articles concerning Africans that took on life-like proportions—pieces documenting insurrection and its aftermath; runaways and their suspected routes and cohorts; and whole families for sale. One of the most outstanding of those was the aforementioned advertisement about an enslaved man named Cook. The author of the advertisement adds a curiously revealing comment among the descriptive attributes of the runaway, Cook. He alerts potential slave capturers that Cook “pretends to be free.” This exemplified a typical contradictory perception evidenced in the newspapers between how Europeans viewed Africans and how Africans may have viewed themselves. For the enslaver, there is no role for this African outside of his enslaved position. Therefore, in the Europeans view, Cook’s rejection of his slave status is pretense.

Similarly, in the *New York Daily Advertiser* on December 17, 1778, a “lusty wench” named Sarah called herself Rachel and declared herself a free woman. Her struggle for freedom was particularly valiant since she was “big with child.”

In addition to the compilation of the information in the newspapers, in particular the descriptions in the ads for runaways allow for the development of a material cultural view of the lives of Africans (Wilson 1994:64). Specifications on the clothing worn at the time of departure served to assist in identifying runaways for recapture. For our purposes, compiling the information from all the descriptions allows to glimpse into the range of clothing worn by the enslaved. In addition, the range of skill levels are also evident. One ad described a linseed oil mill for sale as well as a “negro who understands the business...to teach the purchaser in the management of the mill etc.” (March 25, 1762, *New York Gazette, Weekly Post-Boy*).

Implications for the research are far-reaching. Phase II involved OPEI interns, Silvia Soro-Ferrer, a student at Fordham University, Diana Pinkett who attends Lehman College and Deborah Cantor, currently attending Bates College. They investigated such topics as the resistance of New York’s early African-American community under British rule, the role of Black newspapers in the rise of the African American community in the early 1800s and the role of the American Colonization Society in Liberia; investigations all constructed through the intensive use of the primary source newspapers.

In conclusion, the public educators and interns reported their research experiences to be extremely fulfilling, “an opportunity to leaf through the pages of a forgotten history.” Overall, this research project has underscored the responsibility that we all have—to remember the ancestors from the past by memorializing their spirits and telling their stories.

For recommended reading on this subject and references see page 6

NOTES FROM THE HOWARD UNIVERSITY BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY LABORATORY

Darius A. Annis, Public Educator

To date the laboratory research conducted by the African Burial Ground project has continued to uncover significant and insightful scientific and cultural information relating to the health conditions and quality of life of the ancestral remains. Currently, the research team has cleaned, reconstructed, and examined over 100 burials.

As a result of stringent examination, research of the ancestral remains have yielded vital information which aids in the interpretation of lifestyles and living conditions. A significant percentage of individuals exhibited osteological pathologies associated with (manual) labor stress. For example, abnormal bone growth in the neck related to the carrying of heavy burdens on the head, several cases of traumatic muscle pull involving the arms, cases of severe infectious disease in adults, and developmental defects and nutritional problems in young children. Furthermore, there has been additional evidence of head trauma, exhibited in a second woman who may have received a blow to the head. Additionally, there has been evidences of "squatting facets" a condition reflecting the absence of sitting, as a customary practice, in the traditional work-day of some African societies.

From the standpoint of public education, the Biological Anthropology Laboratory has hosted many tours. With approximately 200 entries in the Visitor's Registry, it is estimated that many more have passed through just to take a glimpse of the ancestral remains and assess the work of the research team.

From distinguished scholars and community activists to secondary school students, the laboratory has make a conscious effort to educate visitors about the African Burial Ground Project while simultaneously sensitizing them to the importance of African American participation and contribution to the study of biological anthropology. We have received such visitors as: Reverend C. Holloway, member of the former Federal Steering Committee; visiting from Nigeria and representing the National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Dr. Tao T. Gella, Director General; Mr. Minke Prosper, Head of International Relations, representing the Association of Africans in Europe; and Joyce Turner, Director of the Pompey Museum of Slavery and Emancipation, Nassau, Bahamas.

Finally, the African Burial Ground Project continues to attract the curious and interested from all academic and social backgrounds. It is our hope that as further investigation continues, we will be able to continually provide fresh and stimulating insight to the lifestyles of our African ancestors in colonial New York during the 17th and 18th centuries.

DID YOU KNOW?

Since our official opening in May of 1993, OPEI has conducted presentations and tours for more than 12,000 individuals!

CROSSING THE WATERS:

Emilyn L. Brown

W.E.B. DuBois once commented that Africans seem to hold little fear of death, regarding it "familiarily and even fondly as simply a crossing of the waters..." Spoken nearly a century ago, DuBois' words still maintain a sense of poignancy, while providing a glimpse of the wide spectrum of beliefs and traditions associated with death in Africa. Of all phases marking human existence on the continent — naming ceremonies at birth, initiation rites at puberty and the institution of marriage — it is burial traditions that impart the greatest meaning to the concept of community.

Transition from belief to ritual is supported by a specific world view. For instance DuBois' earlier reference to water underscores a belief held by many African societies that death is a journey. The Mende of Sierra Leone believe that the last gasps of a dying person are efforts to climb the hill of death. A the "crossing-the-river-ceremony" held days later for the departed, celebratory offerings acknowledge their arrival in the and of the dead. Similarly, the view held by the LoDagaa, located in farming communities in northern Ghana and Burkina Faso, is that the land of the ancestors lies in the west across a river of death. The fee to cross this river is twenty cowries which must be furnished by those who attend the funeral. In Tanzania however, the Chagga contend that it takes nine days of travel over rugged desert terrain to reach the spiritual realm. As a result, their deceased are 'fed' with milk and wrapped in animal hides for protection from the sun (Creel 1990:69; Mbiti 1990:155).

The practice of providing food, libation, gifts and personal possessions, found in and on graves, can be traced to Egyptian antiquity. Just as physical circumstances determine how the deceased are to be maintained, protected or compensated, the question of why varies from region to region. In many societies such offerings to the recently departed are thought to avert future calamities of drought, failed crops, infertility, or the consequences of a restless spirit searching for its belongings.

The Basuto, Lozi, Lugbara, Shilluk and others maintain the traditional belief that the soul of the dead go to the sky to be closer to God. This belief is also held among the Mbuti* (formerly referred to as pygmies) of the Central Rain Forest, and the San (Bushmen) of the Kalahari, both considered hunter/gatherer societies. However, the burial practices of the Mbuti and the San differ from what may be considered traditional in other groups. For example, the San bury their dead in a fetal position laying on the left side facing east. Binding of the knees with rope close to the chest is markedly different from those societies who bury their dead wrapped in blankets or mats, on an east-west plane. Following the family's farewell, their makeshift camp is dismantled and the area abandoned except for periodic visits. Many anthropologists speculate that the lack of formal rites may have to do with the view of spirituality these nomadic groups associate with their surroundings. Death merely represents an extension of the laws of nature (Thorpe 1991:23).

In a great many cultural groups however, outward displays of grief, night vigils and celebratory gatherings are considered as significant as the funeral itself. Traditions practiced by the Abaluyia of Kenya illustrate this point. Although men and women both demonstrate strong, emotional grief, women follow a sustained pattern of mourning. Once death is apparent, the widow begins to wail and is soon joined by her sons and daughters. As she moves through the community lamenting her loss, men beat the tall grass and bushes with sticks while old men blow horns, possibly to flush out malevolent spirits. The Abaluyia keep their deceased unburied for two days to allow relatives and friends to gather. The night vigil and festive ceremony, well documented among Africans throughout the diaspora, takes place on the second day. While a vigil is held to ward off the possibility of witchcraft, always suspect in deaths not caused by old age, the music and dance that follow the vigil are thought to please the deceased and comfort the family. An Abaluyia woman who has been faithful dances with spears in her hand at the ceremony, and if past childbearing age, dons the garments of her husband (Mbiti:148).

Because the tradition of wailing by women is so strongly rooted in many African societies, an inability to cary can be considered an offense. Among the

Continued on page 7

FALL 1994 EVENTS CALENDAR

Compiled by Ama Badu Boakyewa

October 9 - October 28, 1994 The Association of Caribbean-American Artists presents their 14th annual Art Exhibition featuring David Gerald Wilson in Anthropomorphism, A Retrospective of Ultra-Perspective Plausible Juxtaposition Jacob Javits Federal Bldg. - 26 Federal Plaza, Duane St. entrance, New York, NY. Opening Reception Oct. 9, 1994 2:00pm

October 30, 1994 - July 30, 1995

The George Gustav Heye Center of the National Museum of the American Indian opens at 1 Bowling Green. Featured exhibits include This Path We Travel: Celebrations of Contemporary Native American Creativity; All Roads are Good: Native Voices in Culture and Life. Open daily from 10am - 5pm

October 31 - Jan. 9 - Celebration and Mourning photo exhibit by Marilyn Nance, MTA Arts for Transit. Grand Central Station across from Hot and Crusty Deli. Contact: Mona Chen, 212.878.7170.

November 2, 1994 - Schomburg Museum presents Critical Perspectives Forum — Race Matters, 7:00pm. Moderator: Cornel West, Panelists: Lani Guinier, Hugh B. Price, Patricia J. Williams. Langston Hughes Auditorium

November 3, 1994 - African Burial Ground lecture and slide presentation with Dr. Sherrill D. Wilson, Director of the Office of Public Education and Interpretation of the African Burial Ground. Fraunces Tavern Museum, Thursday Lunch Time Lecture Series, 54 Pearl Street, NYC, 12:30 pm 212.425.1778

November 5, 1994 - Reclaim the Memories - Walking Tours. Black Women's History Tour, 1:00pm - 3:00pm. 914.966.1246

November 5, 1994 - Odwira (African New Year) Celebration. Sponsored by Bosum-Dzemawodzi Rochdale Village Hall, 10:00pm until. Call 718.528.6279 for ticket info

November 5, 1994 - Langston Hughes Library presents Queens College Black Historical Lecture - Black New Yorkers: The Best of Times and the Worst. Professor Maureen Pierce-Anvan 2:00pm -

November 6, 1994 - Reclaim the memories — Walking Tours Greenwich Village Tour 1:00pm - 3:00pm. 914.966.1246

November 6, 1994 - From The Studio Gallery a talk by Marilyn Nance. The Studio Museum in Harlem, 3pm to 5pm. 144 West 125th Street, NYC. Contact: Daniel Veneciano 212.864.4500

November 12, 1994 - Lecture by Celestina Trower on The Science of Numerology 82 Rutland Road, Bklyn., NY 718.693.9371, 3:00pm

November 13, 1994 - Nkiru Books presents J. California Cooper, author of book In Search of Satisfaction. 3:00pm - 5:00pm

November 19, 1994 - Educators' Symposium for African Burial Ground and Five Points Archaeological project 10:00am - 5:00pm 212.432.5707

November 19, 1994 - Concert featuring Tulivu-Donna Cumberbatch & Trio. Vocalist Tulivu is indeed a Diva in the tradition of Carmen McRae, Sarah Vaughn and Nancy Wilson among others. She has toured extensively in New York, Europe, and the Caribbean. African Poetry Theater 176-03 Jamaica Ave., Jamaica, NY 718.523.3312

November 19, 1994 - Reclaim the Memories - Walking Tours. African Burial Grounds and Historic Commons Tour. 1:00pm - 3:00 pm. 914.966.1246

November 20, 1994 - Reclaim the Memories - Walking Tours. Harlem Highlights Tour, 12:00pm - 3:00pm. 914.966.1246.

November 26, 1994 - Reclaim the Memories - Walking Tours. Wall Street Area Tour, 1:00pm - 3:00pm 914.966.1246

Fall Calendar continued

December 3, 1994 - Langston Hughes Library presents Black History Lectures: One Generation after Independence. Prof. Alem Habtu.

December 6, 1994 - Schomburg presents Ask Your Mama: Twelve Moods for Jazz by Langston Hughes featuring Rawn Spearman and Vinnie Burrows. Langston Hughes Auditorium, 7:00pm.

December 10, 1994 - 10th annual Langston Hughes Library Kwanzaa Celebration, Florence E. Smith Community Ctr., Corona, NY

December 10, 1994 - Malik-A Kwanzaa Tale, entertainment for entire family in this two character, one act play at the Jamaica Arts Center

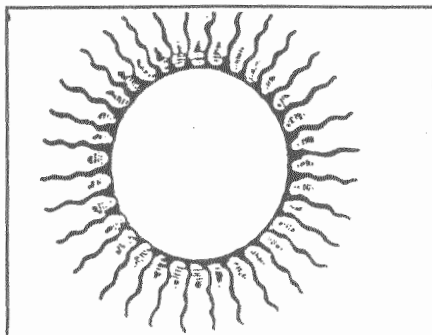
ONGOING PROGRAMS

Queen Afua - Monthly, sister-to-sister, brother-to-brother support group for people working on healing their lives through the cleansing of the mind, body, spirit. Call 718.399.1903 for information.

Bosum-Dzemawodzi - Weekly dance and drum classes starting in October at 7:30pm, Monday and Wednesday at 115-62 Sutphin Blvd., Jamaica, NY 718.843.6213 or 528.6279 for info.

Headstart Bookstore - Study groups on various topics relative to the African experience every Tuesday, 604 Flatbush Ave., Brooklyn, NY (at Rut-land Road). Call 718.469.4500 or 4501 for schedule.

Sankofa is now in Brooklyn... An epic story about the enslavement and subsequent struggle for freedom by millions of Africans. Plaza Twin Theater, 314 Flatbush Avenue (bet. 7th Avenue and Sterling Place) for showtimes and ticket information, call 718.636.0170. For school and group bookings, call 212.246.4047. Volunteers are needed! Call 212.505.1770. And in Manhattan too! At the Thalia Theater, 250 West 95th Street at Broadway, NYC.



Recommended Reading/Reference for New Views from Old Voices

Hodges, Graham R. ed., Pretends To Be Free. New York: Garland Publishing, 1994.
Slave Runaways in North Carolina, 1791-1840, New York: Garland Publishing, 1994.

Parker, Freddie L., Advertisements for Slave Runaways in North Carolina, 1791-1840, New York: Garland Publishing, 1994.

Smith, Billy G. and Richard Wojowicz, Blacks Who Stole Themselves: Advertisements for Runaways from the Pennsylvania Gazette 1728-1790. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989.

Wilson, Sherrill D., New York City's Black Slaveowners: A Social and Material Culture History. New York: Garland Publishing, 1994.

F.Y.I.

- o *The last meeting of the Federal Steering Committee on the African Burial Ground took place August 22, 1994.*
- o *Community Activist Sonny Carson has organized the Sankofa Committee to obtain the Chambers Street human remains (excavated Feb. 1992) for re-burial in Ghana.*
- o *New York State Senator David Paterson is currently spearheading a committee of concerned citizens who will work toward establishing a world class museum to honor the African community that lived in colonial New York. Call 212.870.8500 for information.*

Crossing The Waters
(cont. from page 4)

BaManianga of the Kongo, women whose "strong eyes" shed no tears are considered a disgrace to their family and community. The underlying logic involved is one of reciprocity, i.e. "today we cry for you, tomorrow we will cry for me" (Bockie 1993:100).

The subject of night burial deserves further mention because of the perception that it may be a widespread practice in Africa. This assumption may have grown from documented practices associated with enslaved Africans in the "New World," but the realities of intensive day labor, coupled with the need for private ceremony, may have been equal factors in its use. In Africa, time of burial is also influenced by societal views. The LoDagaa, for instance, bury their dead in the morning or evening in the belief that departed souls may be basking in the cemetery during the afternoon hours. In contrast, the aforementioned Abaluyia bury men and women in the afternoon unless they are village chieftains who are buried at sunset (Mbiti:149).

Another common assumption, no doubt furthered by Western interpretation, is that death in Africa automatically ensures status as an ancestor. African scholar John Mbiti argues that the term is misleading and contends that the role of ancestor is an acquired one, accomplished through ritual devotion and ceremony by family and friends of the deceased (Mbiti:83). In Zulu society, for example, the ukubuyisa idlozi ceremony (bringing home of the spirit) is held by the bereaved family within two years of death. When performed for men of high position, an ox is sacrificed to the ancestors, his name added to the praise list and the ceremony held culminates in the eldest son dragging a tree branch, symbolic of the spirit, from the grave site to the homestead (Hammond-Tooke 1974:328). The Shona of Zimbabwe hold the kugadzira a year after death to settle the spirit and elevate it to ancestral status. The communal meal which follows not only reaffirms relationships within the family, but allows for the dispersal of possessions, formerly belonging to the deceased, including wives, land and title (Thorpe:64).

These rites performed for and to the ancestors also bring closure to periods of mourning, fear of pollution and the sense of chaos imposed by death. These rites may include sacrificial offerings or sacred dance.

Among the Dogon of Mali the Dama ceremony begins with a sacrifice to the symbolic Great Mask, which the Dogon associate with the origins of death. Masked dancers, standing on the former homes of the deceased perform not only to protect the living, but to usher lingering spirits northward where the larger ancestral community is believed to dwell (Ray 1976:142).

Ray also writes of the Akan society of Ghana, and its efforts to renew bonds with those who have passed on in the form of an annual tribute. Ancestors and their continuing deeds for the community, are remembered through the Big Aday (Wukudae) or Small Aday (Kwesidae) ceremonies performed on Wednesdays and Sundays respectively. Announced by drumming on the morning of the event, the ceremony begins after traditional ancestor stools are ceremonially blackened and water poured by a female elder, a symbolic gesture that allows the ancestors to wash their hands before eating. Beginning with the oldest stool, an offering of plantain, meats and wine are presented in acknowledgement and thanks for past and future ancestral intercession. The village chief then invites the ancestors to partake:

*My spirit grandfather,
Today is Wednesday Aday
Come and Receive this mashed
plantain and eat
Let this town prosper...*

Whether similar or difference in approach, the underlying urgency of maintaining proper burial rituals continues to inform the prayers and rituals of various cultures of Africa. Burial traditions not only serve to underscore the strength of kinship ties between past, present and future generations, but affirm an even greater belief in the promise of life, and its ultimate victory over death.

Many African populations are misidentified by the language they speak or assumptions made by researchers. Some of the names used in this article may not reflect what Africans call themselves

For detailed references see page 9

FOLEY SQUARE LABORATORY UPDATE

Jesse Ponz

Too Close for Comfort: Overcrowding in Five Points

The Foley Square archaeological lab crew is in the process of unraveling several mysteries as analysis of the Five Points Site artifact collection continues.

In the backyard of **Lot 5**, on the **Courthouse Block**, are the remnants of more than half dozen structures, many apparently representing a sequence of sanitation facilities through time. The earliest thus far, is **Feature B**, the remains of a circular, stone-lined privy pit — the underground portion of an outhouse. Based on a preliminary look at the artifacts contained within the feature,” the structure appears to have been used during the last quarter of the 18th century through the first quarter of the 19th, possibly as late as 1840.

By the mid-19th century, a considerable portion of the backyard of **Lot 6** appears to have been taken up by a large septic system, most likely built to accommodate an increased number of people living in houses on the property. In the center of the yard was **Feature J**, a stone-lined, circular structure, about 10-feet in diameter and nearly 9-feet deep. Based on artifacts recovered from within, **Feature J** appears to have been filled at the turn of the 20th century, though many of the items date to an earlier period, some as far back at the 1840s.

*As the city improved its methods of sanitary waste disposal, facilities that went out of use were filled with garbage which, when dated, provided archaeologists with indicators of when the feature was in use and when it was retired.

From **Feature J** pipes radiated out to **Feature A**, an oblong or cigar-shaped structure, and to **Feature U**, a small circular structure. The pipe connecting **Features J and A** cuts through **Feature Z**, what may have been a cistern — a barrel shaped structure to collect rainwater — that went out of use prior to the existence of **Feature J**.

One possible scenario as to how the septic system operated is as follows: **Feature A**, which consisted of a pipeline with multiple outlets, appears to have been a school sink, a row of privies equipped with a simple mechanism using the force of gravity to flush waste water, in this case, into **Feature J**, which may have been a cesspool. **Feature U**, a brick structure with a sandy bottom, may have been a sump, into which excess waste water or overflow from **Feature J** may have been piped.

Though we cannot pinpoint with certainty the manner in which the septic system operated, it is clear that the backyard of **Lot 6** was crowded with diverse structures and pipes related to the disposal of human waste. Thus, in addition to dismal sanitary conditions, little or no room was left for other activities, suggesting that the lot's residents, probably working class people, endured a dire lack of space.

Enter mystery number two. In stark contrast to the poverty suggested by cramped quarters and unhygienic conditions in **Lot 6** are some of the artifacts recovered from **Feature J**. The deposit, consisting of typical domestic refuse (dinner plates, wine and mineral water bottles, drinking glasses, furniture parts, animal bones and oyster shells), clearly represents more than one household. At least one family, represented by an assemblage of cheap undecorated ceramics, appears to have been of modest means.

Continued on Page 9

Foley Square Update (cont. from page 8)

In another household, however, very costly ceramics were in evidence, including a large quantity of transfer-printed Staffordshire imported from England. In addition, many of the ceramics, including a tea pot and sugar bowl, were parts of matching sets. Though sets of ceramic tablewares had become readily available on the mass market by the 1840s and 50s, they were still relatively expensive. Another costly item was a stoneware mineral water bottle, engraved Herzogthum, Nassau [Germany], suggesting that at least some of the residents of Lot 6 were relying on long-distance trade—always an expensive proposition, for medicinal products. Thus, a seeming contradiction exists between the artifacts of some Lot 6 households, which point to a lifestyle above poverty level, and the cramped quarters within which these same people lived. Perhaps working class New Yorkers had access to material goods, but not to decent, affordable housing.



Missionaries and Drinking Mugs

Whatever the economic status of the residents of Lot 6, at least one household was associated with the missionary reform movement of the mid-19th century, for amid the refuse of **Feature J** was a cup bearing the transfer-printed inscription:

"FATHER MATTHEW/TEMPERANCE & INDUSTRY/INDUSTRY PAYS DEBT"

Theobald Matthew, born in 1790, County Tipperary, Ireland, joined the Franciscan Order when he was 28, and then went to work among the poor of County Cork. In 1838, responding to what he perceived as the destructive effect of alcohol, he devoted himself to temperance reform. Focusing on education, hard work and total abstinence from alcohol, his mission grew from a local to a national and then international movement with millions of followers. His visit to America, in 1848, was possibly the source of the insignia cup found in **Feature J**.

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY:

- o October 7, 1821 William Still chronicler and compiler of Underground Railroad records was born.
- o October 28, 1798 Levi Coffin, founder of the Underground Railroad was born (see Update's book review on the Underground Railroad pg. 17).

References for Crossing The Waters:

Bockie, S. The Invisible Powers: The World Of The Kongo People, 1993. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press.

Creel, Margaret, ed. by Joseph Holloway, "Gullah Attitudes Toward Life and Death," Africanisms in American Culture. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990.

Mbiti, John. African Religions and Philosophy. New Hampshire: Heinemann Books, 1990.

Quarcoopome, T. West African Traditional Religion. Ibadan, Nigeria: African Universities Press, 1987.

Ray, B.C. African Religions. Englewood, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1976

Thorpe, S. African Traditional Religions, Pretoria, South Africa: University of South Africa, 1991.

ZIP CODE

Children's Word Scramble Answers

- | | |
|------------------|------------------------|
| 1. philatelist | 9. mint |
| 2. commemorative | 10. covers |
| 3. stamp | 11. issuance |
| 4. artist | 12. air mail |
| 5. postal | 13. postmaster general |
| 6. letter | 14. catalog |
| 7. image | 15. post office |
| 8. mail | |

THE CHILDREN'S CORNER

Cynthia R. Copeland

A Colorful Little Patch of History

Picture this! You're on an exciting vacation to let's say..."Dinotopia," and you can't wait to tell your family and friends all about your visit. So, what do you do? First, you write a note on paper or a store bought postcard. Then you prepare the envelope or card to be mailed by addressing it. Finally you purchase or ask your parents or somebody for a stamp so that you can mail it. Well, in the land of "Dinotopia" all they have are these really cool looking dinosaur stamps...from ankylosauros to zugodactylous, and the images almost jump off the sticky square.

As you stare at the illustration in fascination and awe, the revelation hits you. For the first time, and maybe it's because of your interest in dinosaurs, you realize just how much a stamp says about practically anything you could ever be interested in. You also realize just how long you've taken STAMPS for granted throughout your "old years." Suddenly, there is tremendous value placed in a stamp.

Often referred to as "art in miniature", there's always something exciting to note about a stamp. Maybe you're curious about why the topic is featured, or you're wondering who does the art work, or how long a particular design will be around. Perhaps you get more involved with the process of licking or peeling paper off the back of the stamp and placing it in its traditional upper right hand corner. Whatever your interest, stamps — like books, can send your mind soaring to places you've never been before. And perhaps you'll ask questions you never asked before too.

You can learn a lot when you glance at or examine a stamp closely. As a hobby or activity, you can collect them and show them off to your

friends. When your friends call you a philatelist (phi-lat'e-list), don't get upset. It's just a word for stamp collector.

Stamps are a great starting point if you want to find out about a particular country, theme or a time in history. And speaking of history, the 18th century African Burial Ground that was uncovered in New York City from May 1991 through October 1992 and is the largest of its kind ever to have been excavated, may be featured as a commemorative stamp in the near future.

Concerned citizens worldwide, are petitioning the U.S. Postmaster General, (that's the "top dog" at the U.S. Postal Service), to consider issuing a stamp that will symbolize and honor the African Burial Ground. Many of the petitioners believe that a stamp is a great way to educate the masses, because every time a person places the stamp on something to mail, they will look at the illustration and be reminded of this magnificent world class archaeological find and a very important part of history. By raising their awareness about not only the African Burial Ground, but of the early African presence in colonial New York and of all the significant contributions the ancestors made to the city, country and world, people will become aware of something perhaps they knew nothing about.

You and your classmates can participate in making this dream become a reality. If you feel that it's important for people of African descent to know their history, and that other people should know about the history and culture of people unlike themselves, take action action and join in the Commemorative Stamp Campaign. All you have to do is sign your name and address as

continued from page 10

your name and address as neatly as possible on a circulating petition form (see page 18 of this issue or write to us). If you're so inclined, you can pass the petition around to your family members and friends too. Collect as many signatures as possible, then send the completed forms to our office.

The Commemorative Stamp Campaign, which started in late June of this year, will continue through 31 December 1994. The ambitious goal is to collect **ONE MILLION** signatures, that way, we can show the Postmaster General, and anyone else involved in the decision making, that we have tremendous support rallied around this stamp request. To date, more than 22,000 signatures have been collected.

To find out more about stamps and stamp collecting, **put your face in the following books:**

Briggs, Michael, **STAMPS**, 1992. New York: Random House.

Lewis, Brenda Ralph, **STAMPS!: A YOUNG COLLECTOR'S GUIDE**, 1991. New York: Lodestar Books.

You can get these two excellent and highly recommended books and others at your local library. Another good resource is **The Postal Service Guide to U.S. Stamps**, published by the United States Postal Service. This book is available through their Direct Mail Catalog. If you're interested in collecting, visit your local General Post Office (G.P.O.), go to the Philatelic Services Section and ask for a copy of **Stamps etc. - A Direct Mail Catalog**. Once you've looked through the colorful and exciting pages, talk with your parents and ask them to help you get started with your new hobby. As you define your tastes and interests, you'll soon be collecting stamps the world over, commemorative covers (special collective envelopes), special editions and more. Spread the stamp fever and convince your friends to collect stamps too. It's a great way to see the world.

ZIP CODE - Unscramble the words below and then try to make a very long and sensible sentence using each word. Clues have been provided, but try to stretch your mind a bit before using them. Answers to the scramble appear on page 9

1. SPHTALIETLI

Clue: Sounds like an insult but is just another word for stamp collector

2. MMMVRCOEAOITIE

Clue: A reminder, in remembrance

3. PSATM

Clue: Pre-paid postage

4. STIRTA

Clue: Skilled in the learned arts

5. LPAOST

Clue: Relating to the mails

6. RLETET

Clue: A form of communication

7. MIEGA

Clue: The incredible likeness of being

8. IALM

Clue: Something sent or carried

9. INTM

Clue: Fresh

10. OCSRVE

Clue: Collectible Envelopes

11. AUSCENSNI

Clue: To give

12. LAIRMIA

Clue: To deliver by aircraft

13. RLGASRPOENTMEASET

Clue: The bossiest person at the Post Office

14. OLGTACA

Clue: Take action with this book o'stuff

15. FCSPOIETOF

Clue: The Big Mail Place

VOICES OF OLD NEW YORK

Emilyn L. Brown

The timely words that appear on the cover of this issue of Update were spoken by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper more than a century ago. Addressing the immorality of a society that would allow racial inequality to flourish, many of Ms. Harper's views were no doubt were the result of her own experiences. Born to free parents in Baltimore, she suffered deprivation at a young age as a result of being orphaned. Forced to earn a living as a domestic at age thirteen, Ms. Harper's rise from domestic worker to teacher and ultimately one of the most sought after lecturers and authors in the nation heightened her awareness of various forms of inequality in America. The topics of her lectures ranged from women's suffrage, to the tragedy of disenfranchised African Americans. In the excerpts that follow, the political and moral message of her words, framed by rare intellect and courage, are still applicable today.

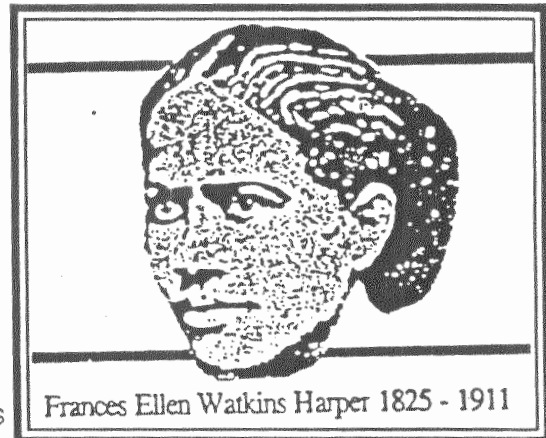
...The tendency of the present age, with its restlessness, religious upheavals, failures, blunders, and crimes, is toward a broader freedom, an increase in knowledge, the emancipation of thought, and a recognition of the brotherhood in man; in this movement woman, as the companion of man, must be a sharer. So close is the bond between man and woman that you can not raise one without lifting the other. The world can not move without woman's sharing in the movement, and to help give a right impetus to that movement is woman's highest privilege...

Through weary, wasting years men have destroyed, dashed in pieces and overthrown, but today we stand on the threshold of woman's era, and woman's work is grandly constructive. In her hand are possibilities whose use or abuse must tell upon the political life of the nation, and send their influence for good or evil across the track of unborn ages.

As the saffron tints and crimson flushes of morn herald the coming day, so the social and political advancement which women has already gained bears the promise of the rising of the full-orbed sun of emancipation. The result will be not to make home less happy, but society more holy; yet I do not think the mere extension of the ballot a panacea for all the ills of our national life. What we need to-day is not simply more voters, but better voters. To-day there

are red-handed men in our republic, who walk unwhipped of justice, who richly deserve to exchange the ballot of the freeman for the wristlets of the felon; brutal and cowardly men, who torture, burn, and lynch their fellow-men, men whose defenselessness should be their best defense and their weakness an ensign of protection. More than the changing of institutions we need the development of national consciousness, and the upbuilding of national character...

Today women hold in their hands influence and opportunity, and with these they have already opened doors which have been closed to others. By opening doors of labor women have become a rival claimant for at least some of the wealth monopolized by her stronger brother. In the home she is the priestess, in society the queen, in literature she is a power. In legislative halls law-makers have responded to her appeals, and for her sake have humanized and liberalized their laws.



The press has

felt the impress of her hand. In the pews of the church she constitutes the majority; the pulpit has welcomed her, and in the school she has the blessed privilege of teaching children and youth. To her is apparently coming the added responsibility of political power; and what she now possesses should only be the means of preparing her to use the coming power for the glory of God and the good of mankind; for power without righteousness is one of the most dangerous forces in the world.

Reference: Bogin, Ruth & Lowenberg, B.J. Black Women In 19th Century American Life: Their Words, Their Thoughts, Their Feelings. University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania State University, 1976.

COMMUNITY VOICES

Compiled by Donna Harden-Cole

The Commemorative Stamp Sub-Committee of the Committee for the African Burial Ground has been actively involved in promoting the issuance of a stamp that will honor the 10-20,000 men, women and children of African ancestry whose remains were recently recovered from the burial site. Petitions have been and continue to be distributed in various communities. To date, more than 22,000 signatures have been collected from 30 states across the U.S. as well as 6 foreign countries, including Tanzania. We recently asked a number of concerned citizens to express their opinion of the importance and value of a Commemorative Stamp.

**Herb Boyd, Reporter Amsterdam News,
New York, NY**

A Commemorative Stamp can help to stamp out ignorance. It's another tool, another way of exposing some very important features and artifacts of our history and culture. Each time you lick one, you're reminded of the importance of your ancestors. It is a symbol and a mini-reminder of our large and significant past.

**Leona Sellers, Asst. Real Estate Specialist
Prudential Realty Group, Newark, New Jersey
Volunteer, OPEI**

The Value of a Commemorative Stamp is that it carries the message both far and wide. As a collector's item a Commemorative Stamp would tell our story, thereby preserving our history. Since stamps travel all over, people from other cultures will be touch with this historical event.

Joanne Harris.

Concerned Citizen, Brooklyn, New York

It would document the existence of the African Burial Ground. Also, black people in America would be recognized beyond the role of slaves. A Commemorative Stamp would therefore serve to raise the consciousness of the existence of the African in New York.

"Kojo" Easton Davis

Concerned Citizen, Queens, New York

Commemorative Stamps are important for cultural, ethnic, and more importantly, for civil significance. It symbolizes important events and/or individuals from the past in common, practical, everyday usage. It can be a educational supplement, especially for the young.

Richard Brown, Chair

**Commemorative Stamp Sub-Committee,
New York, NY**

A well known proverb states that 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder.' For me personally, the most important value, is the encapsulation of the Africa Burial Ground in lower Manhattan in a miniature size, a picture or record of our nation's history and culture. In this form, highlights of our history can be available to every person throughout the country. Such an information medium can also open doors to little known or neglected subjects of our nation's history.

ARE YOU ON OUR MAILING LIST?

AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND STAMP PETITION NOTES

Marie-Alice Devieux

"One tree cannot make a forest" - - Nigerian Proverb

To date the OPEI office has received over 22,000 signatures from individuals from over 30 states across the United States, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and countries such as Germany, Jamaica, Italy, and Tanzania in support of the African Burial Ground Commemorative Stamp. We have been pleased and overwhelmed by the level of enthusiasm exhibited by churches, community centers, colleges and schools and we would like you to know that all of your letters and comments are read and appreciated. Often the letters we've received are from those of you who have taken the initiative to circulate the petition at your offices and neighborhoods. In fact, one woman even marched her bicycle into our offices and handed in 200 signatures that she single-handedly obtained during her travels. When was the last time a historic landmark site summoned that kind of motivation?

In your efforts to solicit signatures for the petition, a number of you have indicated that the amount of work still left to be done to educate all Americans about the significance of the African presence in the colonial era. More specifically, one petitioner expressed concern over how her enthusiasm was met with incongruous misconceptions and resistance:

...I was going to get a million signatures myself. I quickly realized however [that some people didn't] share my zeal for the subject. I had to sit a minute and think when the woman at the mall, selling African 'stuff' (dolls, clothes, jewelry, etc.) told me to let her think about signing the petition. I was so outdone-but only for a moment!...Thank you so much for enlightening us. God knows we need it...
R.R. Cleveland Ohio

This individual went on to send in over 60 signatures.

And finally some of you shared some of your anecdotes on the challenges you faced in sending your material for us.

...[I've already] mailed half of my signed

petitions. This batch was held on to by fiends that "forgot." As I stood in the post office [to mail this to you], I got 10 [signatures] in 5 minutes. I hope no one else went through this...S.P. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

But of all the letters, perhaps the most moving act of initiative was from a woman who told us:

My son...who is an inmate at a correctional facility, is the one who sent this petition to me to get signatures. His aunt and I were glad to do it, as were all the people that signed these petitions. We received knowledge about something we didn't know before...G.F. Warrensville Heights, Ohio

Congratulations to everyone who contributed to the issuance of a stamp which will honor a people history almost forgot. Below is a list of those who made extraordinary efforts in the collection of signatures:

THANK YOU!

Amy
Janet Blit
Mary S. DeLoch
Elizabeth Fulcher for FFHSJ
Charlene Gangadharon
E.W. Higgins
Annette Harewood
Patty Jacobs
Alvin Jones
Grace F. Jones
John Logan for the AAGG
Thomas Lucas
Patricia Lytle
Carlton (Curly) Monroe
Nora Palmer
G.P. Phillip-Cornell
Sadye M. Pierce
Hortense M. Rowe
Leona Sellers
Armida Smith
Maureen Spencer Forrest
Sister Teresa
Edith Thompson
Dorothy Thompkins for the
MLKDC
Virginia Robinson
Arlene Wanliss Gooding

Please note: the original petition deadline of August 1, 1994 has been extended to December 31, 1994.

AFRICAN AMERICAN BEGINNINGS IN OLD NEW YORK

Sherrill D. Wilson, Ph.D.
(Part 1 of 3)



African American history in New York City began with the Dutch occupation of the colony in early 17th century (1600s). Enslaved Africans were among the island's earliest settlers. The Dutch colonial city of New Amsterdam was administered by the Dutch West India Company. The first Africans on the island arrived as enslaved men in 1625 and 1626. The first enslaved women arrived in 1628. The early Dutch records indicate that the names of the first eleven male slaves were: Paulo Angola, Simon Congo, Big Manuel, Little Manuel, Manuel de Gerrit de Reus, Anthony Portugis Garcia, Peter Santomee, Jan Francisco, Little Anthony, and Jan Fort Orange. A sense of the homeland of some of these men is incorporated in their surnames. We do not know the names of the first African women on the island.

New Amsterdam's first enslaved Africans worked as farmers and builders. They also worked in the prosperous fur trade that originally brought Henry Hudson and the Dutch West India Company to early New York. Some of the male slaves worked to help construct the wall that was built to keep the settlers safe from the native population. This wall's location today is known as Wall Street.

Enslaved Africans under the Dutch rule in New Amsterdam were allowed rights and privilege that they would later lose under British rule. Under the Dutch, enslaved Africans were allowed to marry legally, sue and testify in court against whites and work for themselves when their services were not needed by the Company or other enslavers.

Some enslaved Africans owned property.

In 1644, nearly twenty years after their arrival the original enslaved men and their wives were granted "conditional freedom" by the Company. Their freedom was based on the conditions that they pay back annually to the company twenty-two and a half bushels of beans, corn, peas or wheat and a fat hog. If they did not meet these requirements they could be reenslaved. The children of these "conditionally freed" people born and unborn, remained the property of the Company. All of the manumitted received land grants upon which to farm. Most of the families had already been farming on this land before they became free people.

Today most of this land is located in Greenwich Village. Washington Square Park, Minetta Lane (then Minetta Creek), and Thompson Street were all part of the land allotted to the newly emancipated. At this time the area was known as generally undesirable swamp land. Each man received between one and twenty acres of land.

The Dutch in their expansion of the island had greater need for labor and continued to import enslaved Africans to New Amsterdam to meet those labor needs. Ships carrying enslaved Africans arrived in the Port of New Amsterdam in 1649, 1655, and 1659 bringing hundreds of African men, women and children. Many were sold south. New Amsterdam's first sales tax, an import tax of 10%, was imposed to discourage slave merchants from selling "human cargo" outside of the colony.

The Dutch records do not document the movement and actions of all African people on the island during this period, however, they do note that there were Africans who had never



Detail of 1642 Print Above

African American Beginnings (cont. from page 15)

been enslaved living on the "free Negro lots." Today these lots are located on the land stretching from Astor Place to Prince Street.

In 1665, the Dutch surrendered New Amsterdam/New Netherlands to the British in a bloodless takeover. For most European settlers, little changed on the island that then became New York. For African New Yorkers however, the British occupation marked a period of severe change.

The British occupation of New Amsterdam on August 29, 1665, brought enormous change for African New Yorkers, both enslaved and free. Under Dutch rule, some enslaved Africans had gained half and full freedom status. Even while enslaved by the Dutch, Africans living in New Amsterdam had legal and social rights. For example, under the Dutch no master could whip an enslaved African without the permission of the Dutch Common Council. This and many other rules changed under the British.

The British formed the Royal African Company to import Africans directly from the African continent into New York ports. Historian Edgar J. McManus explains: "From the start of the English occupation the creation of a commercially profitable slave system became a joint project of both government and private interests. Unlike the Dutch West India Company which used slavery to implement colonial policy, the Royal African Company used the colony to implement slavery."

New York's first slave market during the British period was erected at Wall Street and the East River in 1709. At the beginning of the 18th century (1700s) there were 800 African men, women, and children in New York City. This was about 15% of the total population. The local and state census documents of this period did not distinguish between free and enslaved Africans until 1756. The term "slave" was used to describe all Africans and their descendants.

natives was a time of adhering to strict regulations and laws as imposed by the British. Laws were passed that restricted where Africans could be employed, how they could be manumitted or freed, and laws were enacted to keep those who were free from aiding runaway slaves. The New York "Slave Codes" grew so numerous that in 1712 a slave revolt erupted. Enslaved Africans and natives gathered in an orchard on Maiden Lane with hatchets, guns, knives and hoes and set out to burn and destroy property in the area.

Nine whites were killed during the revolt. Twenty-one enslaved Africans were executed. Six were reported to have committed suicide. More laws were passed after the revolt had been quelled. Africans and natives were prohibited from carrying weapons, or entering military service. The revolt emphasized the growing fear that New York whites had of its growing African population.

Part II of African American Beginnings in New York will continue in the next issue of Update. This article originally appeared in *Through Black Eyes: Revisioning N.Y. History*, Vol. 1, #1

For Further Reading:

Kenneth Davis, The Royal African Company. NY: Longman & Green, 1957.

Litwack, Leon J. North of Slavery: The Negro In the Free States. Ill.: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961.

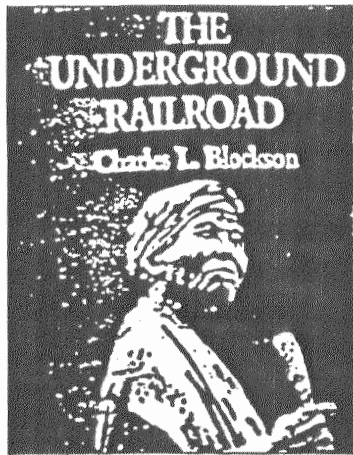
Edgar J. McManus, A History of Negro Slavery In NY. NY: Syracuse University Press, 1966.

Wilson, Sherrill D. New York City's African Slaveowners: A Social and Material Cultural History. NY: Garland Publishers, 1994.

Life for 18th century New York Africans and

BOOK REVIEW

Reviewer: Sherrill D. Wilson, Ph.D.
Book: Hippocrene Guide to
THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD
Author: Charles L. Blockson
Publisher: Hippocrene Books, Inc.
Date: 1994
Price: \$22.95



Renowned expert on the Underground Railroad, Charles L. Blockson, has once again provided invaluable insight, information and resources on the clandestine network by which many enslaved Africans in north American escaped to freedom. This volume evolved from Blockson's association with the National Parks Service (NPS) Underground Railroad Project. The primary goal of the project was to identify specific Underground Railroad locations throughout the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean. Serving as the chairperson of the advisory committee to the National Park Service, Blockson was a principal participant in the creation of the NPS historic trail of Underground Railroad markers.

Blockson's Hippocrene Guide to THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD contains a chronology of the underground railroad, a glossary of terms, Following Harriet Tubman's Trail: A suggested tour, songs of the underground railroad, a bibliography, and listings of key underground railroad tour organizations and African American anti-slavery newspapers. The heart of this volume is however, a state-by-state descriptive listing of Under-

ground Railroad sites. Part six of the book identifies locations in Amherstburg, Chatham, Dresden, Edgar, Maidstone, Ontario and Niagara-on-the-lake locales in Canada.

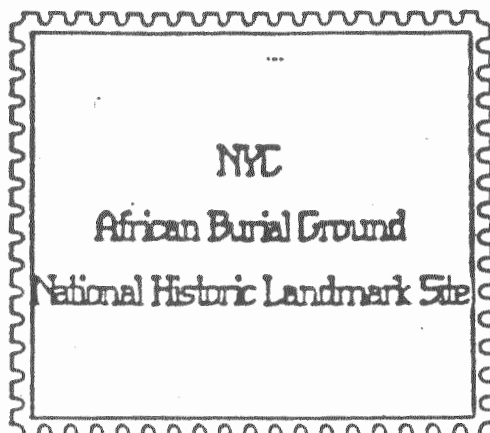
New York Underground Railroad sites identified in this volume include: Mother Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Isaac Hopper House in Manhattan, The Bridge Street African Methodist Episcopal Wesleyan Church, Plymouth of the Pilgrims, and Siloam Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn. Other New York State sites include: Cemetery Inscription of a former fugitive slave in Ithaca, Susan B. Anthony House and Frederick Douglass Monument in Rochester, the Suspension Bridge, Riverside Inn, the Niagara Frontier Bible Church in Lewiston, John Brown's Home and cave in North Elba, and other locales. The home of perhaps the most renowned Underground Railroad conductor, Harriet Tubman in Auburn, New York, is also included.

Blockson's earlier books: The 'Underground Railroad First Person Narratives of Escapes to Freedom In The North (1987), and African Americans in Pennsylvania (1994).

UPCOMING BOOK REVIEWS IN FUTURE ISSUES OF UPDATE:

- *Long Hammering: Essays on the Forging of African American Presence In the Hudson River Valley to the Early 20th Century by A.J. Williams-Meyer.
- *Slavery on Long Island: A Study In Local Institutional and Early African American Communities by Richard S. Moss
- *The Afro American in New York City 1827-1860 by George E. Walker
- *The Free Negro In New York City In The Era Before the Civil War by Rhoda G. Freeman
- *Pretends To Be Free: Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial New York and New Jersey by Graham R. Hodges and Alan E. Brown

PETITION FOR AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND COMMEMORATIVE STAMP STATUS



We are committed to the national and international recognition and preservation of the heritage of Africans and their descendants in the Americas. We are launching a national campaign to have the U.S. Postal Service issue an African Burial Ground Commemorative Stamp. Our goal is to collect 1,000,000 (one million) signatures to submit to the Citizen's Stamp Advisory Committee (CSAC). Your assistance and participation in the collection of signatures is needed and appreciated in this historic endeavor.

Please return petitions as soon as possible to the address below:
All petitions must be returned by December 31, 1994:

Office of Public Education & Interpretation
of the African Burial Ground (OPEI)
6 World Trade Center
U.S. Custom House, Room 239
New York, N.Y. 10048

Telephone 212-432-5707 Fax & Hotline 212-432-5920

NAME

(Please print clearly)

COMPLETE ADDRESS

Number, Street, Apt.

City

State

Zip

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